

VZCZCXRO5654
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #0624 1141248
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 231248Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0631
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTJF HOA

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 000624

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR S/E WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG
NESC FOR HUDSON AND PITTMAN
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [EAID](#) [KPKO](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: ABYEI UPDATE: UNMIS OBSERVERS ACTIVITIES RESTRICTED BEFORE
MANDATE ENDS

¶1. (SBU) The 14-day period during which UNMIS peacekeepers were permitted to patrol outside of the town of Abyei ended on April 21, without being renewed by Sudan's Joint Military Commission (JMC). The JMC did grant UNMIS specific authority to travel from Abyei town to Higlig in order to meet and escort convoys of returning IDPs during the next eight weeks.

¶2. (SBU) Even during the 14 days period, UNMIS observers' ability to operate north of the town was severely restricted by the SAF, according to UN officials in Abyei. (One described it as "negotiated access.") According to one UNMIS official, UN peacekeepers were required to obtain clearance for patrols 24 hours in advance and were restricted to travel along an agreed, predetermined route. On patrol, observers were not able to investigate immediately new reports of incidents. This severely limited their ability to respond to reports in a flexible and timely way.

¶3. (SBU) In response to the SAF's restrictions on UNMIS, the SPLA responded by also restricting UNMIS' freedom to patrol to the south of the town. SPLA officials told Juba Consul General Datta on April 21 that they were unwilling to provide access to their activities without reciprocal access from the SAF. They further noted that the current situation in Abyei is "normal", and stated that the SPLA is not engaging in any unusual level of activity. Senior Misseriyya Arab leaders told CDA Fernandez on April 21 in Khartoum that the Charge's visit to Muglad had "bought some time" by calming Misseriyya fears of being marginalized but that those "good feelings" would not last forever.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The announcement two weeks ago that UNMIS observers would be able to patrol outside of Abyei town offered hope that they would be able to reduce local tensions by providing some transparency to the security situation there. There does seem to have been an improvement in the overall atmosphere in Abyei, for a variety of reasons. The failure to extend this mandate, plus the restrictions imposed on UNMIS before it ended, means that uncertainty and the resulting potential for conflict, either intended or unintended, will continue. It is important for the United States to keep highlighting the issue of Abyei and to continue to counsel patience and progress on the ground to both the Misseriyya and Ngok Dinka.

FERNANDEZ